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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SAIGON 161

REF: A) SAIGON 76 B) SAIGON 154 Pol 14 Viets

SUBJECT: BIO, PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES, NGUYEN DINH LUYEN-TRAN VAN THOAN

1. LUYEN IS AN ELDERLY NORTHERN DOCTOR AND FORMER POLITICIAN; THOAN IS AN ELDERLY SOUTHERN JUDGE AND FORMER NOMINEE FOR THE CABINET OF PREMIER PHAN HUY QUAT.

2. LUYEN WAS BORN IN 1902 IN NAM DINH, NORTH VIET-NAM. HE RECEIVED THE M.D. DEGREE IN 1925 AND HAD A PRIVATE MEDICAL PRACTICE FROM 1926 UNITL 1954. IN MAY 1951 HE WAS REPORTEDLY SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE DAI VIET PARTY; HE AND NGUYEN TON HOAN WERE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE SOUTHERN WING OF THE PARTY. IN JULY 1953 LUYEN PRESENTED TO EMPEROR BAI DAI A MANIFESTO SIGNED BY LEADERS OF AN ALLIANCE OF VARIOUS GROUPS. THE MANIFESTO URGED BAO DAI TO FORM A NATIONALIST COALITION GOVERNMENT AND TAKE A STRONG STAND WITH THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT IN FAVOR OF VIETNAMESE INDEPENDENCE.

3. IN 1954 LUYEN BECAME PROVINCIAL MEDICAL CHIEF IN PHUOC TUY PROVINCE, A POST HE HELD UNTIL AT LEAST 1962. IN NOVEMBER 1960 THE REBELS ATTEMPTING A COUP AGAINST NGO DINH DIEM NAMED LUYEN MINISTER OF HEALTH IN THEIR PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT, BUT WHEN THE COUP COLLAPSED HE APPARENTLY RETURNED TO HIS PROVINCIAL POST. IN SEPTEMBER 1964 LUYEN WAS APPOINTED TO THE HIGH NATIONAL COUNCIL AND NAMED CHAIRMAN OF ITS POLITICAL AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE. HE WAS ARRESTED IN THE DISSOLUTION OF THE COUNCIL BY THE ARMED FORCES COUNCIL IN DECEMBER 1966 BUT RELEASED IN JANUARY 1965.

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REVIEWED BY Dan Isenberg DATE 10/5/81
RDS ☐ or XDS ☐ EXT. DATE
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EXCISE EXISTING MARKINGS ☐
DECLASSIFIED ☐ RELEASABLE ☑
RELEASE DENIED ☐
PA or FOI EXEMPTIONS

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4. THOAN WAS BORN IN 1908 IN BIEN HOA, NEAR SAIGON, TO A WEALTHY FAMILY. HE WENT TO FRANCE IN 1922 AND RECEIVED A MASTER'S DEGREE IN LAW FROM A FRENCH UNIVERSITY IN 1932. HE PRACTICED LAW IN FRANCE UNITL 1937, WHEN HE RETURNED TO VIET-NAM AND BECAME A MEMBER OF THE SAIGON BAR. HE SERVED IN THE ARMED FORCES AS A RESERVE OFFICER 1939-41 AND AGAIN 1946-47.

5. IN 1950 THOAN WAS CHIEF JUDGE OF THE SAIGON COURT OF APPEALS. IN 1951 HE WAS NAMED TO SET UP THE VIET-NAM MILITARY COURT, AND HE HEADED THE MILITARY COURT DIRECTORATE. HE WAS PROMOTED TO LIEUTENANT COLONEL IN 1953 AND COLONEL IN 1955. IN 1957, AFTER MILITARY COURTS WERE SET UP ALL OVER THE COUNTRY, HE RETURNED TO CIVILIAN LIFE AND WAS DEPUTY PROSECUTOR OF THE SAIGON COURT OF APPEALS; IN 1962 HE WAS APPOINTED PROSECUTOR. IN 1964 HE WAS THE HEAD OF THE JUDICIARY DIRECTORATE OF THE SOUTHERN REGION OFVIET-NAM, AND A MEMBER OF THE SUPREME COURT OF APPEAL.

6. IN MAY 1965 PREMIER PHAN HUY QUAT WANTED TO APPOINT THOAN MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR TO REPLACE VNQDD LEADER (AND PRESIDENT PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE) NGUYEN HOA HIEP. HIEP REFUSED TO RESIGN AND THE THEN CHIEF OF STATE PHAN KHAC SUU INSISTED QUAT HAD NO POWER TO FORCE CABINET RESIGNATIONS. SUU REFUSED TO ACCEPT THE THOAN APPOINTMENT, AND THE RESULTING CRISIS LED TO THE ASSUMPTION OF POWER BY THE MILITARY IN JUNE 1965. BUNKER
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